

New Libby school track may not be completed this fall

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LIBBY — School officials are debating whether to take a gamble on the weather and install the new high school track or play it safe and lose another season of home meets.

"We've got some decisions to make this week," said district superintendent Kirby Maki.

The new track is being installed to replace the old one that was dug up last year so the Environmental Pro-

tection Agency could remove asbestos-contaminated vermiculite, which had been used as a track surface in the 1970s.

Administrators and coaches are discussing the issue and trying to decide if the district should push for the rubberized surface to be applied to the track this fall.

The track was paved this week and needs two weeks to cure before the rubber surface can be installed. The rubber takes five weeks to cure. During that time it can't rain and the temperatures have to remain above 60

degrees in the day and 40 at night. Otherwise, it might not set up properly.

"They're concerned that if they go ahead with this, there could be a warranty problem," Maki said. "In other words, the rubber could curdle and not lay flat, and they would have to scrape it off and redo it at big expense next spring."

The cost of the rubberized surface is estimated at more than \$70,000. If the school moves ahead with installation against recommendations, the district could be liable for the replacement cost, Maki said.

The first scheduled home football game had to be moved out of town last year because of the work at the track, and Libby wasn't able to hold any home track meets last spring. If the track work moves ahead this fall, home football games and soccer matches might have to be moved to avoid disturbing the surface as it cures. The other option is to put a fence around the track and hope for the best, Maki said.

But if the work is postponed until spring, another season of home track meets will be lost.

Maki said he had hoped to have the work completed by now and expressed frustration with working with the government contracting system.

"Whatever we do, there's going to be controversy," he said. "But the school can't control when the government does contracts or when they do the work."

When completed, the track will have been worth the wait, but that's hard to tell students and parents looking at another year without home meets, Maki said.